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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0461  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5542  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 3212  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1402  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1376  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2365  
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 4061  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 5059  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2657  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 3202  
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 1229  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 3057  
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001995

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ID](#) [SOCI](#)  
SUBJECT: SULTAN FORMALLY ANNOUNCES HE'S RUNNING FOR  
PRESIDENT

REF: A. JAKARTA 1517  
[1](#)B. JAKARTA 1321  
[1](#)C. SURABAYA 082

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In front of a large crowd, the Sultan of Yogyakarta has formally announced his intention to run for president in 2009. The announcement was widely expected given that the Sultan has been campaigning for some time. A popular figure in Java, the Sultan faces a challenge in translating his assets into votes for president. He also does not appear to have firm party support at this point. Nonetheless, given the cultural/political importance of his sultanate, he is a figure to watch. END SUMMARY.

AMID MUCH FANFARE, SULTAN TAKES THE PLUNGE

[1](#)2. (U) Sultan Hamengkubuwono X has thrown his hat into the ring and is running for president. Amid much fanfare, the Sultan announced his intentions on October 28 at a campaign event held in Yogyakarta, the special district in central Java of which he is governor. At the event, the Sultan stated "I hereby declare my readiness to become president in [1](#)2009. I can't stand seeing the people suffer...ten years of reform have not brought fundamental change." In making an official announcement, the Sultan joins such figures as President Yudhoyono and former president Megawati who have already taken the plunge.

[1](#)3. (U) The announcement was expected given that the Sultan has already been on the political hustings for some time (see reftels). The event was held in front of a crowd of 20,000 in central Yogyakarta. During the ceremony, the Sultan was surrounded by dozens of other Indonesian aristocrats from Yogyakarta and from other regions of the country. According to contacts who were at the event, he was repeatedly cheered by the crowd. The aristocrats present at the occasion also announced their endorsement of the Sultan's effort.

## A POPULAR FIGURE

14. (C) The Sultan, 52, is a popular, well-liked figure among Yogyakartaans but does not have much support elsewhere, except in Papua where the Christian population likes his secular approach. He serves as the head of an extended aristocratic network in Yogyakarta. His father, Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX, served as a vice president of Indonesia during the Suharto era and was a major hero during the Indonesian revolutionary era. Due to the support he rendered to the revolutionaries, the Indonesian government recognized Yogyakarta as a special district and gave the sultanate official authority, with the Sultan earning the right to serve a political role as governor. (Note: Since 1998, the Sultan has to earn that right via an election in the local council, which basically is a mere formality. Per Ref A, after the Sultan's supporters held rallies in Yogyakarta, President Yudhoyono recently signed a decree extending the term of the Sultan as governor by three years.)

15. (C) Since becoming head of the Sultanate upon the death of his father in 1989, the Sultan has maintained high popularity in his region. He also has become a national figure, serving on many boards and presiding at many ceremonial events. He ran a vigorous nationwide campaign to build support before announcing his candidacy.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTY SUPPORT

16. (C) The Sultan does not appear to have much party support. He is a long-standing member of Golkar, Indonesia's largest political party, and serves on the advisory board of

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the party. He is also popular with some of the party's regional councils in Java. That said, he has little influence on the party's machinery, which is controlled by Golkar Party Chair and Vice President Yusuf Kalla.

17. (C) Kalla is not considered particularly popular, but most observers believe that he can continue to control the party into the near- to mid-term. Kalla is also considering whether to run for president in 2009 on the Golkar ticket depending on how the party does in next year's legislative elections. It seems possible that the Sultan will try to grab Golkar's nomination (if the party actually makes one). If he does not get it, he will be in a tricky position. This, in light of the fact that--depending on an ongoing debate--he probably will have to be nominated by some 15-20 percent of members of Parliament in order to get on the ballot. He is, however, on the shortlist as a potential vice presidential candidate for several major political parties.

## HE COULD BE A CONTENDER

18. (C) The Sultan's campaign faces some headwinds. He is not considered very charismatic and everyone who knows him well has said that he did not inherit his father's articulate nature and strategic range. His party network is not apparent, and, while he seems to have some financial wherewithal, he does not have an advantage in that area over other contenders, such as President Yudhoyono and former president Megawati. Despite being a Muslim, his very secular philosophy hurts his popularity among devout Muslims. Nonetheless, given the cultural/political importance of his sultanate, he is a figure to watch. Deeply respected in Java--the most populous area of the country, he seems to have a natural voter base that could boost his chances.

HUME